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Letter dated 17 March 2016 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to the open debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region", scheduled to be held during the meeting of the Security Council on 21 March 2016.

Following consultations between the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations, I have the honour to transmit herewith the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017 (see annex), which shall be officially launched during the open debate.

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

I invite you and the members of the Council to welcome the Regional Strategic Framework during the open debate.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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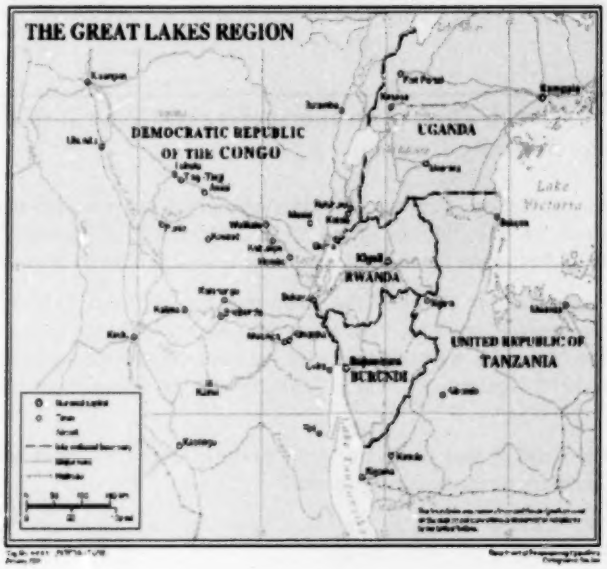
Annex

Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017

In support of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region



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Abbreviations

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
ECGLC	Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FNL	National Liberation Forces
HDI	human development index
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
NEET	not in education, employment or training (youth)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Structure and background of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework

1. The Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework reflects the United Nations development approach to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region,[1] a strategic tool for the promotion of stability, signed on 24 February 2013.

2. In May 2014, the resident coordinators in the Great Lakes region met in Kigali to discuss the appropriate response by United Nations country teams to the crises in the region. They launched a process for the preparation of a joint regional strategy. In March 2015, while the initiative continued within the whole region, the approach was further focused on the core area of conflict. namely, the eastern border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

3. The Regional Strategic Framework was validated at a meeting held on 7 December 2015 in Nairobi, convened by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, and the Chair of the regional United Nations Development Group for Africa, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye. The validation meeting brought together the resident coordinators of the five countries, the regional United Nations Development Group and representatives of regional organizations.

4. The Regional Strategic Framework as set out herein will serve as the reference document for the development action of the United Nations in the region. The Framework first outlines the political context for the action of the United Nations country teams and describes the following three foundations, upon which the Framework is constructed:

- Key findings of a regional conflict analysis
- A regional socioeconomic analysis
- The road map of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region for the period 2015-17

5. The theory of change underpinning the Regional Strategic Framework identifies the rationale for intervention under following six pillars:

- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Economic integration, cross-border trade and food and nutrition security
- Mobility
- Youth and adolescents
- Gender and sexual and gender-based violence
- Justice and conflict prevention

6. It is anticipated that a two-year implementation plan (for 2016-2017) and the budget for the Regional Strategic Framework will be finalized in early 2016,

[1] S/2013/131, annex.

following consultations with partners. Under each pillar of the strategy, a clear distinction will be made between:

(a) Activities to be undertaken by United Nations country teams within their respective United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks that have regional implications;

(b) Issues that are cross-border, involving the interaction of two or more country teams, which must agree on what needs to be done;

(c) Initiatives that are subregional and that will require regional organization and resource mobilization, justified on a case-by-case basis, where this adds value.

Political context of the Regional Strategic Framework

7. The progress of the peace process in the Great Lakes region has been slow and marked by a sluggish pace of neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which, together with looming electoral processes in several countries that are signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, raises key concerns about the potential for fresh violence in specific countries. This could result in significant violations of human rights and an increase in widespread displacement of people in neighbouring countries. Indeed, this has already occurred in Burundi, where controversial elections were held in July 2015. Long-term, durable peace and security will require a comprehensive approach which cuts the economic lifelines of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. Such an approach should also address comprehensively the drivers of conflict, as outlined in the conflict analysis. The United Nations family and other international actors are beginning to set a new agenda linking peace and security initiatives with development activities, which constitutes the essence of this regional strategic framework.

Foundations of the Regional Strategic Framework

Regional conflict analysis

8. The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be plagued by recurrent insurrections, long after the signing of a peace accord in Sun City, South Africa, in 2003. Additionally, economic competition between populations and local administrations within individual countries, as well as competition among countries, has contributed to the fuelling of fresh cycles of violence and criminalization of armed groups practising community-based self-defence. Taking advantage of this structural instability, regional armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) have established strongholds in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From there, they have carried out criminal operations aimed at destabilizing countries in the region.

9. The countries mainly affected by the armed groups are Uganda (ADF), Rwanda (FDLR) and Burundi (FNL). However, each transnational problematic has

specific characteristics owing to its deep linkage with local socioeconomic tensions and conflicts in the home country. These complex and intricately structured localized and regional conflicts have also facilitated the emergence of criminal networks. The criminals take advantage of the political tensions subsisting between several of the Great Lakes countries to pursue illegal exploitation and illicit trafficking of natural resources.

10. The signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework are divided into a number of different, and often overlapping subregional bodies: the East African Community (EAC), comprising Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; the Southern African Development Community (SADC), including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania); and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), comprising Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

11. Both the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community have developed separate economic integration schemes. While regional bodies and member States of the Great Lakes region are building tax barriers and separate development plans, local economies remain deeply integrated. Low employment opportunities, combined with a weak civil administration and the absence of a harmonized system of taxation, contributes to the attractiveness to the youth of alternative sources of income, derived from criminal activities.

12. Taking advantage of weak judicial systems and widespread impunity, armed groups in the region perpetrate human rights abuses, such as sexual and gender-based violence. People are motivated by political grievances that are often expressed through ethnically motivated hatred. Furthermore, exposure to violence over generations has resulted in a breakdown of social norms and taboos. The spinoff is that violent behaviour is now perceived as "normal", with unending cycles of intergenerational violence persisting at all levels of the society (namely, the household, the community and the government). The absence of effective judicial cooperation among the key countries has fuelled impunity. Armed groups, high-profile indicted war criminals and those guilty of genocide have enjoyed protection and freedom of movement within the region.

13. Despite the complexities and diversity of the drivers of conflict, the local contexts and the actors impacting the Great Lakes region, there also exist potential means of building peace. While it is necessary to differentiate among the various areas of conflict and the specific regional actors involved (FDLR, ADF and FNL), there are similarities between the drivers of the conflicts in each hotspot. In all areas, the local conflicts are motivated by competition for land and economic competition among local ethnic groups. Despite the tensions and conflicts among several ethnic groups, strong ties do exist between some of them on opposite sides of the border areas in every hotspot. This presents an opportunity to build the confidence of citizens and civil society in the Great Lakes region.

14. Besides limited access to land, another shared challenge in all the hotspots is the low level of employment opportunities. Access to effective and quality social services, such as education, health and social safety nets, is another major challenge. This accounts for the attractiveness of belonging to militias and other violent groups, as well as of engaging in other illegal activities. Notwithstanding,

the presence of a civil society deeply involved in the prevention of conflicts in all of the hotspots shows that despite the specificity of the conflict in each area, there is a common basis for response by the population.

15. Even if local economies are deeply integrated and interdependent, armed groups, businessmen and politicians use ethnic grievances and economic competition to increase their control over the illicit export of natural resources as well as over roads and other physical networks. While poor governance and weak implementation of the rule of law is common in all the hot spots, local initiatives to build effective governance and accountability do exist.

Regional socioeconomic situation analysis

16. Human development index (HDI) values for all five countries in the Great Lakes region are very low. With rankings of 186 and 180, respectively, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi are at the bottom of the list of 187 countries ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the basis of their HDI indicators. Neither has moved up for the last five years. Among those five countries, Rwanda has shown the greatest improvement. The United Republic of Tanzania has also made some progress towards improving human development since 2008.

17. Wide income disparities among sections of the population hinder human development in the region. The levels of income inequality in Central and East Africa are high (the Gini index for Central Africa is 45.0). The landscape of inequality in the Great Lakes region has not changed, although inequality decreased slightly in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania between 2000 and 2012. Poverty is characterized predominantly by its rural nature, widespread informality and feminization. Unemployment is high, especially among youth. Approximately one third of young people in the labour-force age bracket are without work and the proportion is growing. Less than 10 per cent of the working population in most of the countries of Eastern and Central Africa is formally employed. On the positive side, the Great Lakes countries have achieved remarkable results in primary school enrolment within the last generation. Nevertheless, completion rates in the region are the lowest in the world.

18. All five countries in the region are among the 20 fastest growing African economies. Rwanda ranks second after Sierra Leone, with an average annual growth of over 8 per cent (over the period 2008-2013). Uganda, which occupies sixteenth place on the list of 20 and last place among the five countries in the Great Lakes region, grew at an average annual rate of just less than 6 per cent (over the period 2008-2013).[2]

19. The Great Lakes region is rich in natural resources. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, natural resources are estimated to be worth 24 trillion United States dollars. The eastern part of that country, which is the centre of the conflict in the Great Lakes region, has one of the greatest concentrations of precious minerals and metals in the world. Most of those minerals are used in the

[2] See Economic Commission for Africa, African Union, African Development Bank Group and UNDP, *MDG Report 2014: Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals* (Addis Ababa, 2014).

manufacture of a range of high-tech devices, such as mobile phones, laptops and spacecraft. They are therefore in high demand and their market value is very high. Natural resources have become a major driver of the conflict in the region, especially in light of the fragility of States and their inability to exercise appropriate authority over non-state actors. The value of the illegal production of and trade in minerals and natural resources is estimated to be at least 1.25 billion United States dollars per year, yielding over 15 per cent of profits.

20. In the Great Lakes region, over 75 per cent of the 170 million inhabitants of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania live in the core Great Lakes area, which makes it one of the world's most densely populated areas.

21. Close to 4 million displaced persons across the Great Lakes region are waiting for the opportunity to return or integrate, many of them having left their homes decades ago to escape conflicts and poverty. Solutions can come only through a regional perspective and with the offer to those displaced of viable choices. The United Republic of Tanzania has recently offered residency to over 160,000 long-term refugees, which is encouraging evidence that the regional approach to confronting the plight of refugees and displaced persons can work.

Conclusions of the analysis

22. The conflict and socioeconomic analyses speak to the vital importance of addressing cross-border issues linked to the border of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The root causes of conflict in one country are frequently to be found in a neighbouring one, with events in one country often triggering reactions and repercussions in another. There are huge flows of natural resources across national boundaries and strong flows of migrants and refugees, as well as fugitives from international justice.

23. The conflicts feed off and reinforce each other. The success of national-level initiatives will be enhanced when they are implemented as part of a regional focus, with simultaneous and/or complementary action across the countries involved. The trends and patterns of conflict demonstrate the centrality of border areas as the main theatres where risks manifest themselves and proliferate. However, opportunities for peacebuilding also exist in these border areas, which can be tapped to enable the building of confidence, creation of trust and establishment of the momentum for peaceful settlement of conflicts, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Although, traditionally, United Nations country teams act at the country level, the regional analysis makes clear that there is also a need for measures complementary to existing country-based programmes, at a subregional level.

24. At the political level, the Secretary-General has established the Office of his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to ensure that regional political and security issues are addressed in close cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations country teams of the region. Based on an analysis of the political and security situation and the status of implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Special Envoy has drawn up a road map for the period 2015-2017. He has underlined that the new rise in regional

tensions in recent months and the upsurge of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi demonstrate that the progress on the Framework could be reversible.

Road map of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region for 2015-2017

25. The Special Envoy has identified nine priorities for the period 2015-2017. A number of those priorities have a development dimension. Addressing those priorities will form part of the Regional Strategic Framework.

26. The priorities of the Special Envoy encompass:

1. Support efforts to neutralize negative forces through relevant Security Council resolutions
2. Facilitate confidence-building efforts in the region
3. Promote peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework
4. Strengthen the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the Technical Support Committee of the Regional Oversight Mechanism
5. Facilitate durable solutions to the issues confronted by refugees and internally displaced persons in the region:
   - Support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in addressing the plight of Rwandan refugees in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo
   - Tripartite discussions; a regional approach to the refugee situation in the Great Lakes region
   - Land and property rights for returning refugees and internally displaced persons
   - Humanitarian assistance in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: grass-roots initiatives to facilitate intercommunal dialogue and local integration
6. Facilitate socioeconomic development so as to consolidate peace gains and advance regional economic integration:
   - Facilitate regional development initiatives and, in particular, support for cross-border regional projects
   - Boost private sector investment; organize, with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the private sector conference, including the finalization of the investment opportunities brief
   - Improve management of natural resources, including promotion of transparency in the region's mining sector; improvement of governance and productivity within the artisanal mining sector and the taxation and incentives regimes for mineral production, marketing and export

7. Mobilize the region's active forces, women, youth and civil society, to facilitate the building of the constituencies under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and promotion of a shared vision for peace and prosperity in the region:

   • Empower women as economic agents: support cross-border trading; ensure that women benefit equally from natural resources and agriculture-based initiatives

   • International Conference on the Great Lakes Region sexual and gender-based violence training facility in Kampala

   • Legislative and judicial means to address the culture of impunity for perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence

   • Promote citizenship through civil society engagement within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

   • Youth employment projects

   • Scale up the most imaginative youth programmes in the region

8. Facilitate regional initiatives to fight impunity, improve accountability and advance regional judicial cooperation so as to strengthen the rule of law:

   • National or regional legal initiatives, such as specialized mixed chambers and commissions

   • National vetting mechanisms to remove those responsible for human rights violations from security forces

   • Comprehensive regional strategies with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for judicial cooperation, particularly on sexual and gender-based violence, corruption and illegal exploitation of natural resources

9. Provide leadership and coordination to the international community in its support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including through the mobilization of resources and strengthened donor and partner relations:

   • Quick-impact projects for women and youth

Theory of change

27. It is important that the United Nations act in an integrated manner in support of the mandate of the Special Envoy. It is simply not possible, however, to address the causes of conflict and help to ensure that the countries of the region move onto a positive development trajectory, including addressing human development deficits, without addressing the root causes, which are regional in nature. The requirement for a regional approach underlies the regional analysis. The Regional Strategic Framework recognizes that securing peace, safety, security, stability and economic growth in the region requires multifaceted efforts which address interlinked risks, in an integrated and comprehensive manner across regional borders, as part of the development process. Inasmuch as the drivers of conflict pass from one country to

the next, concerted cross-border action is necessary. The Regional Strategic Framework is premised on the understanding that the homogeneous nature of the drivers of peace, as identified in the conflict analysis, forms a basis for significant engagement towards promoting peace and development through cross-border action. United Nations country teams can take advantage of this homogeneity in undertaking sustainable cross- border initiatives.

28. As a means of laying the groundwork for this regional strategic framework, the United Nations country teams have undertaken a mapping of their existing programmes in areas in which the identified conflict dynamics and human development deficits may be addressed. They have also reviewed the actions of partners. This assessment has enabled the United Nations country teams to identify a series of regional approaches constituting a significant United Nations regional value addition, which will be complementary to the work of other key local, national and international partners. The regional approaches of the United Nations country teams will build on existing country teams' national programmes, as encapsulated in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and programmes and country programme documents which articulate complementary measures at a subregional level.

29. Within the theory of change underlying the Regional Strategic Framework of the United Nations country teams six interconnected building blocks or pillars of the regional approaches needed to contribute to the long-term goal of peace and security in the Great Lakes region are established, based on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework:

- Sustainable natural resource management
- Economic integration, cross-border trade and food and nutrition security
- Mobility
- Youth and adolescents
- Gender and sexual and gender-based violence
- Justice and conflict prevention

Guiding principles for priority regional interventions under the Regional Strategic Framework

30. Under each of the six pillars, three areas of complementary subregional intervention are described. These interventions must abide by the following guiding principles:

- Support the vision of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region of "Creating a region characterized by deeply entrenched values, principles and norms on democracy, good governance and observance of human rights". Programmatic interventions will prioritize respect for human rights and promotion of good governance, including enhancement of capacities, on both the demand and the supply side, to contribute to an environment that is politically and socially cohesive and accountable and that offers improved service delivery to its people.

- Take into account the needs of youth and seek to empower young people.
- Aim to ensure that the management of natural resources and biodiversity is sustainable and benefits communities.
- Ensure that gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women exist, gender mainstreaming being a core priority of the United Nations. Mainstreaming gender means far more than checking boxes: it means making gender central to design and implementation. Integrating gender into all aspects of planning and programming will have a transformational effect upon the Great Lakes region.
- Ensure that health, HIV/AIDS, education and human rights issues are taken into consideration, including through further regional and national adherence to agreed human rights principles, norms and standards, in view of their linkages to peace and security concerns in the region.
- Ensure the conflict sensitivity of all programmes and address conflict drivers as identified in the conflict analysis
- Ensure private sector partnerships and investment
- Support the implementation of adopted regional protocols relevant to the Regional Strategic Framework, including protocols of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, namely: the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; the Protocol on Judicial Cooperation; the Protocol for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity and All Forms of Discrimination; the Protocol Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources; the Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons; the Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons; and the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children.

The Strategic Framework will support other relevant instruments, including the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Protocol on Free Movement and Coherent Legal Migration Policy; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region (2001); the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008); the SADC Protocol on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (2002); the East African Community (EAC) Protocol on Peace and Security (2012); the EAC Protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management (2006); the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly (the Kinshasa Convention) (2010); and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (2004; entry into force, 2006).

The six pillars of the regional strategic framework

1. Sustainable management of natural resources

31. The conflict analysis identifies the unregulated competition over the extraction of natural resources, most of which remains illegal, as a key root cause of the conflict in the cross-border region encompassing Burundi, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The value of the illegal production and trade of minerals and natural resources is estimated to be at least US$ 1.25 billion per year. The strategy will therefore seek to ensure that illegal production is transformed into legal, regulated and transparent production.

32. Effecting this shift should result in significant earnings, both for the state and for communities. There should also be a more sustainable use of natural resources through which natural wealth can be translated into development outcomes. A necessary precondition for this is transparent and accountable management of those natural resources. To this end, the strategy will seek to enable the main actors not only to build among themselves the capacity to negotiate on and value those natural assets, but also to develop both strong public finance management capacity and strong public investment management capacity.

33. As gold exports account for 50 per cent of the illegal flow of resources from the region, focus on this element is likely to have the greatest impact. Only 2 per cent of those revenues show up as taxable production. If illegal extraction and flow of resources were to be transformed into legitimate trade, income would increase exponentially, with the attendant ability of the state to provide the population with better services.

34. Similarly, gradual replacement of illegal charcoal production and illegal regional trade in this product, with more efficient alternative clean sources of energy, should have an equally transformative effect in terms of the conservation of natural resources and a reduction in the influence of illegal armed groups. Sustainable use of natural resources will also depend significantly on the securing of land and property rights.

Outcomes

1. Sustainable use of natural resources will enrich the state and lead to tangible improved community livelihoods (income).
2. There will be justice and fairness in landownership and property rights, because of inclusive and peaceful land management. This will enable those persons in particular who were previously displaced by conflict to come on board.

Primary beneficiaries

Artisanal miners (250,000), displaced persons (up to 3 million), communities whose members live in and around national parks, including in return areas, and all those affected by activities of armed groups.

Priority regional interventions

1. Developing regional natural resources management and sustainable livelihoods in and around the Virunga National Park (in the border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda), and other regional and national parks in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and their immediate cross-border surroundings, in a context of transnational cooperation. Special emphasis to be placed on sustainable production, gradual elimination of current illegal regional trade and gradual replacement of charcoal production by more efficient and alternative sources of clean energy, including the showcasing of examples of sustainable resource management. Restoring already degraded forests and other natural resources, including harmonizing cross-border environmental laws, protocols and regulations guiding sustainable use. In particular, the following actions will be critical elements of regional intervention:

2. Promoting environment-friendly regional gold production and trade which is equitably and transparently taxed, traced and certified. This will serve to cut the lifelines that sustain illegal armed militias and other transnational criminal groups.

3. Securing land and property rights for communities' economic recovery, agricultural production and investment and creating an enabling environment for refugees' return to and reintegration within the region. Increase the capacity of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region secretariat to address the root causes of land-related conflict in the region's natural resource sector. Strengthening regional cooperation among civil society organizations and in research institutions as well as the capacity of key actors in land dispute mediation (including women, the youth, traditional chiefs and parliamentarians). The documentation and dissemination of best practices in land conflict resolution and community resettlement will be prioritized. In addition, this regional intervention will formalize and regulate natural resource exploitation and trade, particularly artisanal gold-mining, artisanal timber logging and charcoal production.

Regional intervention in the three priority areas will be developed and implemented in close cooperation with the International Conference, local governments and the communities.

2. Economic integration, cross-border trade and food and nutrition security

35. There is inadequacy in respect of economic cooperation and regulation, which could support sustainable exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of local communities. Competition between SADC and EAC needs to be shifted to a positive cooperation trajectory through the reinvigoration of COMESA and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). Through technical support provided to COMESA and CEPGL, issues associated with some of the building blocks needed to bridge divides will be addressed. The potentially positive role of the private sector in the region will be harnessed through a process of

partnering with key actors, ensuring appropriate facilitation of cross-border investment and the establishment of growth poles. The issue of the food and nutrition security of border communities in the Great Lakes region needs to be addressed through focusing on enabling small farmers and herders to access modern technologies and sustainable agricultural practices for increased productivity and the building of resilience to climate-related shocks and conditions.

Outcome

1. Increased trade among border communities in the countries in the Great Lakes region.

2. Improved food and nutrition security in border communities in the Great Lakes region.

Primary beneficiaries

Regional interventions under the pillar will specifically benefit border communities, women, youth groups and other members of civil society, particularly the North and South Kivu communities on the Democratic Republic of the Congo side, and border communities in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC), including its permanent executive secretariat, will benefit, as well as economic institutions of the countries in the Great Lakes region. Among these will be ministries of economic development and trade, which promote and support the regional economic integration process. The regional institutions of EAC, SADC and COMESA will also benefit.

Priority regional interventions

1. Support to the permanent executive secretariat of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries on systems and processes for addressing trade and non-trade barriers and promoting economic integration among countries in the Great Lakes region.

   Analysing bottlenecks, developing common commercial and trade standards, promoting participation of women and youth in cross-border trade, and commodity analysis for employment/trade potential; improving border markets and standardization of border procedures; subregional information systems; aid for trade/trade facilitation support. This regional intervention focused on ECGLC will include complementary support measures to COMESA, SADC and EAC institutions, as well as national ministries of economic development and trade.

2. Promote regional private sector access to finance and other support services.

   Initiatives will focus on enterprises and cooperatives operating in cross-border zones in the area of natural resources and agricultural commodities — extraction and harvesting (actions to be coordinated with pillar 1): inter alia, rules and regulations, and policies for the private sector's adoption of voluntary guidelines and certification processes (for

natural resources), addressing labour, human rights and environmental considerations; attaining certification for natural resources; technical and capacity support provided to local producers to enable them to access regional value chains; promotion of legal and transparent investment across sectors covering mines, agriculture and small-scale energy production, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; regional regulatory framework for artisanal mining.

Preparation of investor-friendly briefs, championing of improvement in the investment environment, including through the successful Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, led by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and held in Kinshasa on 24 and 25 February 2016; provision of tools and institutional capacity support, such as through consultations with the public, corporate natural resource policies and conflict and grievance resolution mechanisms and working with private sector enterprises in security risk management.

3. Promote border communities' access to agricultural technology and provide capacity support for increased agricultural productivity and output, and building regional resilience to climate-related shocks and conditions.

Capacity support: advocacy activities, raising awareness and sharing of best practices regionally — with farmers and herders in border areas, with respect to using environmentally sound practices and agricultural techniques; promotion regionally of "purchase for progress"-type interventions; analytical studies aimed at identifying regional or transboundary land dynamics and constraints and opportunities for smallholders in accessing land in and around cities, and support for development of regional strategies to address this; support for access by border communities to new agricultural technology, including high-yield varieties, efficient plant material and sustainable agricultural practices.

3. Mobility

36. Mobility of persons, workers, goods and capital is a key component of regional economic integration. However, forced displacement is both a key driver and consequence of violent conflict. It leads to regional instability and insecurity and other significant humanitarian challenges, and human rights violations, as well as a lack of socioeconomic improvement.

Outcome

37. The mobility pillar will seek to strengthen regional stability by taking a more regional approach to understanding and addressing the causes of displacement. Humanitarian, political and development partners will be brought together to find durable solutions to displacement in the Great Lakes region by building on ongoing initiatives, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/World Bank forced displacement study and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region high-level Regional Consultation Meeting on Land and Property Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees. Greater

social and economic integration and strengthened community resilience can support the orderly movement of persons, goods and livestock across and within borders. Community-based protection will be supported by early recovery and development initiatives which contribute to an improved protective environment in safe return areas.

38. Harmonization and strengthening of immigration and asylum procedures will reduce the illegal movement of people in the region, since harmonization strengthens the capacity of national migration authorities to manage orderly movement of persons across borders. Regional and local tensions are reduced as durable and innovative solutions for protracted displacement are found. Strengthening the exchange of information, including information on disease surveillance, and provision of harmonized health services across borders can help de-legitimize negative attitudes and foster integration. Promoting effective education services for children and young people ensures that they are equipped for such movements and sustainable livelihoods will also be critical.

Primary beneficiaries

Primary beneficiaries of the priority regional interventions will be refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, migrants and border communities

Priority regional interventions

1. Durable solutions

Working together with national, regional and international development and humanitarian partners to encourage integrated, durable and innovative solutions for the internally displaced and refugees, including local integration, voluntary repatriation in conditions assuring safety and dignity and resettlement/relocation. Voluntary repatriation of refugees is conducted within the framework of relevant tripartite agreements entailing building community-based resilience and fostering a socioeconomic environment conducive to lasting returns. This will include access to justice, addressing sexual and gender-based violence, and strengthening education policies and strategies for refugees and internally displaced persons. The UNHCR Regional Refugee Coordinator will assure regional coordination of comprehensive solutions, including managing regional data on refugees and asylum seekers. Partners will also form a working group in which they work together to implement the recommendations contained in the 2015 report of the World Bank and UNHCR entitled "Forced displacement in the Great Lakes region: a development approach". This effort will also bring together national partners to share experiences on challenges, obstacles and good practices for lasting solutions to displacement in the Great Lakes region.

2. Regional border management programme

This includes strengthened government management capacity and asylum procedures; improved information collection and information technology structures; joint border patrols, strengthened integrated border management, including fair and efficient asylum procedures, and adequate reception for asylum seekers; systems and tools for the identification and referral for psychosocial support of vulnerable migrants such as victims of trafficking,

stranded migrants, unaccompanied minors and migrants who have been exploited or abused in other ways; systems for screening migrants in detention to assure protection and access to asylum systems when needed: identification of asylum seekers, provision of adequate counselling on legal options, including consular assistance for migrants who are not asylum seekers: facilitation of labour migration; monitoring of disease, livestock and crops and pest control.

3. Identification, protection and solutions for victims of trafficking through agreed protocols in the region

This will include enhanced capacity of government and partners to provide comprehensive case management covering all dimensions, such as mental health and psychosocial support, through to community reintegration and livelihoods. Particular attention will be paid to the specific needs of women and children, with proper training to ensure that staff in contact with them are providing age- and gender-appropriate care. The presence of wellness centres at border crossings will also be promoted to ensure community resilience to health risks associated with mobility, particularly HIV, through revitalizing the cross-border Great Lakes Initiative on AIDS and expanding it to include other diseases such as tuberculosis as well as provision of psychosocial support.

4. Youth and adolescents

39. Youth and adolescents have been major victims of intergenerational conflict and have limited educational and livelihoods opportunities. Focus in this pillar will be on empowering young people. It is believed that through promotion of the most innovative youth employment initiatives at a regional level, the recruitment of young people into armed gangs, militias and other delinquent groups can be significantly reduced and the exploitation of the youth and adolescents reined back. Sexual and reproductive health services, including for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, will be stepped up to ensure improved health. Cross-border exchanges between young people will be promoted as a means of fostering the sharing of perspectives on common youth problems in the region.

Outcome

40. The strategy is expected to trigger investment in youth and adolescents as a key path towards harnessing the demographic and peace dividend in the five core countries of the Great Lakes region. There should also be increased capacity among girls and boys to improve their skills, which will enable them to be active participants in processes of consolidation of peace and social cohesion through a strengthening of youth engagement and adolescent development. This will include working with the authorities to ensure that mechanisms are in place for allowing youth voices to be heard and taken seriously in local decision-making as it affects them. There will also be a need to guarantee the youth access to information, training and increased economic opportunities so that they can become more independent and more motivated as stakeholders in the process of peace consolidation.

41. The participatory approach to implementation of regional interventions will promote exchange programmes and networking among beneficiaries, as well as common interests, heritage, peace and security. In the context of community-based protection and peaceful coexistence, and in order to reduce vulnerability to forced and voluntary recruitment and other forms of exploitation, education, vocational and recreational activities, including sports programmes, are needed. This pillar therefore envisages a society where adolescents and young people are healthy, educated, safe, skilled and employed and drive regional development and peace and security.

Primary beneficiaries

Marginalized adolescents and young people aged 10-24 in the border areas of the five countries, especially in mobile populations (e.g., migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and cross-border traders), sex workers and exploited children forced into sex work, young people in urban slums and cross-border towns who are not in education, employment or training, children formerly associated with armed forces or groups, and gang members.

Priority regional interventions

1. Youth employment and livelihoods

The interventions seek to increase young people's economic self-sufficiency, to be attained through financial and functional literacy, development of entrepreneurial skills, and provision of hands-on working experiences and coaching. More specifically:

- Youth cooperatives in border communities will be established to produce value added products from locally available resources such as agricultural and mineral products.
- A youth entrepreneurship, training and innovation centre and a youth entrepreneurship fund will be set up in the subregion to allow trained young people to function competitively, equipped with their business ideas, as well as in the promotion of peace and security.
- Partnerships will be developed with both the private and public sectors, as well as donor agencies, in support of youth skills-building in order to allow the youth to participate in construction and infrastructure development projects and environmentally safe mining in the region.
- Youth businesses which provide badly needed safe services at the border crossings (information technology, food, accommodations and provision of other consumables) will be supported.
- Operations research on the effectiveness of the different employment and business schemes will be conducted as a means of guiding an overall regional youth employment scheme.
- The countries' educational curricula will be reviewed to ensure that they adhere to principles of conflict sensitivity, cultural tolerance and inclusion, as well as to enable the strengthening of educational services, so as to promote equity and relevance to the economic and cultural realities of local communities.

2. Innovative engagement of youth

The innovative engagement of various categories of youth aims at infusing young people with a respect for the values of peace and security, democracy, accountability and development, and equipping them with effective participation, leadership and advocacy skills. These will have both preventive and rehabilitative dimensions and will build on what is offered through existing innovative channels such as:

- Cross-border exchanges between national youth forums.
- Encouraging youth engagement with local authorities.
- Collaboration with U-Report and United Nations Pulse Lab Kampala (Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi), focusing on advocacy and channelling of the voices of youth in the Great Lakes region, including feedback.
- Reaching young people through provision of citizenship development, peacebuilding and conflict resolution materials and disseminating them through interpersonal or other innovative communication channels, including digital drums and Internet.org.
- Pilot "Youth Centres for Peace" (Rwanda/Goma) and "Youth for Peace" (Rwanda/Democratic Republic of the Congo/Burundi) will also be replicated at the cross-border areas; youth centres will be transformed into innovation hubs and will be used to increase digital literacy among young people in the border areas, the intention being to expand to the region.

3. Healthy development and protection of adolescents

Establish youth peer educator networks for different categories of young people at risk (for example, children formerly associated with militias and other criminal groups, sex workers, those living with HIV, cross-border traders and those in business and entrepreneurship programmes). They will be equipped with knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, and with reproductive health commodities, such as male and female condoms, which will be distributed to fellow youth after they have been educated.

Other cross-border activities and services will include:

- Establishment of integrated sexual and reproductive health/HIV services in cross-border locations where large numbers of young people at risk congregate.
- Integration of services in youth entrepreneurship and skills development projects.
- Provision of information about citizenship, peacebuilding, human rights and life skills through innovative social media platforms.
- Setting up of prevention and cross-border response and cooperation interventions and systems to prevent trafficking, gender-based violence and other forms of violence against children and adolescents.

- Strengthening civil registration and vital statistics as a means of determining age so as to protect adolescents.
- Establishment of cross-border community-based programmes for prevention of young peoples' participation in armed groups, harmful practices and gang activities as well as rehabilitative programmes: these activities will focus on practical steps for preventing at-risk children from joining such groups and cross-country legal measures.
- Strengthening of regional and intergovernmental mechanisms that have a role to play in harnessing social service delivery at the country level.

5. Gender and sexual and gender-based violence

42. Action is needed to address the unprecedented levels of violence against women and girls, who suffer from grave discrimination in the Great Lakes region. The link between women's participation in peace and security-related decision-making and better outcomes, both for peace and for gender equality, is grounded in political interest theory, where organized representation of interests is assumed to produce policy outcomes of value to the interest group in question. The United Nations country teams anticipate that gender equality, gender justice and sustained peacebuilding can flow from women's participation and leadership in conflict resolution and recovery processes under certain conditions, which the United Nations seeks to support through this strategic framework.

43. The regional interventions will seek to influence power dynamics: the power of domestic constituencies for gender equality in peace and security policy to influence national, community and cross-border decision makers and hold them to account. Unless women's voices and representation are placed at the centre of reform efforts the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework will not consolidate its transformational potential. Research demonstrates that women's active participation in economic life makes peacebuilding and recovery efforts more sustainable and effective, particularly as women are more likely to invest their income in family and community welfare. Female-headed households usually have a greater dependency burden than do male-headed households, mainly because they have less access to the "peace dividends" of revived livelihoods or public services and are frequently unable to reclaim the property of a departed or deceased spouse. In order to break the cycle of poverty, this Strategic Framework will seek to address such exclusion in the Great Lakes region.

Outcome

A peaceful and stable region free from sexual and gender-based violence, in which women and girls are empowered to participate in peacebuilding and economic growth and enjoy equitable access to the benefits of sustainable development.

Primary beneficiaries

Female internally displaced persons and refugees, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, women in post-conflict communities, women leaders in

conflict and post-conflict countries and national institutions responsible for security, justice, trade and the economy.

Priority regional interventions

1. **Implementation of commitments under the Kampala Declaration to address impunity for gender based crimes at the country level**

   This includes the institution of special mechanisms to fast-track sexual and gender-based violence cases, including the setting up of special courts, strengthening of the institutions responsible for justice and security, and supporting data collection and monitoring and reporting on progress. Ensure synergy between the training activities of the Kampala training centre and implementation of the commitments by institutions at the country level.

2. **Enhance women's visibility and participation in decision-making and peacebuilding**

   This will entail visibility of the priorities and rights of women in conflict-affected countries, and capacity-building to enable them to actively engage in policy, development and peacebuilding, as well as engagement of women's organizations in service delivery and advocacy at the community level.

3. **Increase women's economic empowerment and resilience**

   Through support for the Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, the programme seeks to launch the women's Empowerment Principles as part of the UN-Women/United Nations Global Compact partnership; strengthening policy, the operational framework and women's capacity for cross-border trade, empowering rural women victims of armed conflict in situations of food insecurity and promoting universal access to reproductive health services.

6. Justice and conflict prevention

44. The inability of the international community to bring the perpetrators of gross human rights violations to justice and to effectively support measures of conflict prevention has led to a spiral of increasing conflict and sexual and gender-based violence which have plagued the Great Lakes region for over a generation. The Regional Strategic Framework plans to reverse that trend by ending the culture of impunity. The proposed transformational and integrated approach will require strengthening of the mechanisms of justice (traditional and formal), enhancing capacity of local governance institutions to deliver services, addressing the occurrence of violence and holding perpetrators to account (in both traditional and formal ways). There will also be a need to create opportunities for peace dividends, rebuilding civic trust and community resilience. Regional government commitments will need to evidence a respect for human rights. The strategy seeks to realize tangible improvements as an essential contribution to the restoration of trust between citizens and governments, which has been eroded.

Outcome

An increased focus on accountability and strengthened infrastructures for peace and human rights across the region.

Primary beneficiaries

Governments and national/subnational institutions, local communities and authorities, civil society and community-based organizations, traditional, religious, youth and women's associations in border areas in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; justice officials, including law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges, legal professionals and border agencies. Along with citizens seeking justice and reconciliation across the region.

45. As the foundation for effective regional intervention, there will be a focus on improved risk and vulnerability analyses, including use of real-time data, to provide policymakers and planners at the regional and national levels with early warning information which triggers more effective regional response mechanisms for preventing escalation of conflict. Capacities for enhanced regional analysis and early warning, which will allow the United Nations country teams to react quickly to defuse and put in place timely responses to potential conflict, will be strengthened at the country level and anchored regionally to enable regional analysis of conflict and vulnerability. This will build on existing work, including perception surveys conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, to provide a better understanding of populations' perceptions and expectations regarding issues of peace, justice and security. Political economy analysis — particularly of the security sector — will also be deepened.

Priority regional interventions

1. **Strengthening formal and informal institutions, mechanisms and capacities for conflict prevention management and resolution and peacebuilding by working on cross-border initiatives and allied efforts at the regional level — including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and civil society organizations**

Empowering and strengthening communities' and civil society organizations' capacities for peacebuilding to address local-level cross-border conflicts through capacity-building on conflict prevention management, mediation and dispute resolution as well as peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives, with particular emphasis on the strengthening of existing and/or the establishment of local infrastructures for peace, strengthening dialogue and trust among cross-border communities; strengthening cross-border initiatives in community policing, involving citizens in crime prevention, but also increasing confidence and cooperation between communities and the police and border agencies, strengthening United Nations country team-supported national access to justice and community security programmes in border and cross-border communities, including pilot mobile courts, community

policing and a focus on improving the quality of traditional justice mechanisms.

Key border posts and crossings will be identified and provided with support towards strengthening their capacities to better secure themselves (in line with the African Union Strategy for Enhancing Border Management in Africa), including exploring the feasibility of joint border crossings through which to facilitate cooperation between border agencies. Specific interventions could include co-location and joint efforts in investigations, information-sharing, patrols, training (on issues relating to trafficking, smuggling of weapons and other priority subjects) and measures for strengthening detection and interdiction capacities. There will be periodic joint meetings, including cross-border communities (e.g., local authorities, border agencies and local communities). There will also be mechanisms for promoting dialogue and cooperation between cross-border communities. This will be conducted in close collaboration and coordination with pillar 3 interventions, with their focus on protection and migration. Pillar 6 interventions will view this issue through a "security sector and rule of law"-type lens.

2. Strengthen regional efforts to increase controls over the supply side of small arms and light weapons

Small arms and light weapons are a major contributor to the conflict in the Great Lakes region. Working in partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States to ensure a harmonized regional approach to stockpile management practices and particularly leakages from state stockpiles; adequate marking and record keeping; collection of illicit and unwanted weapons, destruction of collected arms and surplus weapons. The regional intervention will also utilize International Small Arms Control Standards in conducting assessments of existing small arms controls in countries in the region and identifying and prioritizing support needs, in order to move all countries in the region closer to compliance with international standards and ensuring harmonization of national controls and legislation.

3. Enhanced judicial cooperation, including law enforcement, border officials, prosecution services, judicial bodies and the legal profession

Improved cooperation at the provincial, national and regional levels, between Governments, justice institutions and communities, particularly in cross-border areas, promotion of consensus and political space, to allow member States to jointly explore the way forward. This may include use of judicial institutions. Regional judicial cooperation and criminal justice reform will use the convening or facilitation powers of the United Nations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and other regional bodies, including SADC/EAC (as well as regional justice organizations, including the Pan African Lawyers Union, the Chief Justices' Forum, the SADC and East

African Lawyers' Associations) to provide the space within which to explore and improve judicial cooperation (within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region protocols) so as to build consensus; explore good practices including South-to-South best practices, as well as potential local solutions through which to punish perpetrators, deter future perpetration of crimes and heal divisions between communities. These consultations will seek to develop an agreeable road map of initiatives for application of the International Conference Protocol on Judicial Cooperation at the national level, regional cooperation focused on the interministerial committee on human rights treaty reporting, cooperation between human rights institutions, regional interventions in issues concerning gender-based violence, natural resources, and accountability and corruption, including money-laundering and financial crimes. Intervention in support of national rule of law institutions in investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating grave human rights violations would be included, where necessary, with regard to the investigation of international crimes requiring regional cooperation (notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Conclusion

46. Progress achieved under the six priority pillars of regional intervention should facilitate a powerful advance towards sustainable peace. In the present situation in the Great Lakes region, however, we can expect that some of the changes being pursued will be resisted.

47. International criminal networks, which are profiting from the illegal trade in natural resources, will put up a strong show of resistance. Those accused of human rights violations will use local groups for protection and to sabotage the justice systems.

48. For true gender equity to be achieved, embedded cultural norms will need to be addressed.

49. Yet, it is essential to move ahead if we are to lay the groundwork for recovery and strengthen the moderate centre which supports peace. Success depends on the capacity to support goodwill and on the tangible follow-through on their commitment of the countries in the region.

50. The Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework has been elaborated in response to the often-stated needs and priorities of governments, leaders and communities. It is intended to serve as a reference document, underpinned by the conviction that coherent action at the regional level, focusing on the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo border area, and early successes, will demonstrate, particularly at this moment of fragility, that it is possible to progress along a development path. The Regional Strategic Framework will build the confidence necessary for key countries to fulfil their commitments.